

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 220507Z JUL 74

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1587

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

UNCLAS HONG KONG 8229

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD CH TS

SUBJ: TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SIGNS ECONOMIC AND
TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROTOCOL WITH PRC

REF: TUNIS 4368

1. TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HABIB CHATTI HIGHLIGHTED HIS SIX-DAY VISIT TO THE PRC BY SIGNING A PROTOCOL TO THE 1972 PRC-TUNISIAN AGREEMENT ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN PEKING ON JULY 14. CHATTI ARRIVED IN PEKING ON JULY 12 WHERE HE WAS MET BY PRC FOREIGN MINISTER CHI PENG-FEI. AFTER SIGNING THE PROTOCOL, CHATTI LEFT PEKING JULY 15 FOR VISITS TO SHANGHAI, HANGCHOW, AND CANTON BEFORE DEPARTING THE PRC VIA HONG KONG JULY 17 (NCNA).

2. IN AN INTERVIEW APPEARING JULY 19 IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HONG KONG STANDARD, CHATTI STATED THAT THE PROTOCOL CALLS FOR COMPLETION OF THREE TUNISIAN ENGINEERING
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PROJECTS COSTING MORE THAN HK\$205 MILLION (US\$41 MILLION).

CHATTI DESCRIBED THE THREE PROJECTS AS INVOLVING (1) THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CANAL LINKING A LARGE DAM AND RESERVOIR COMPLEX IN NORTHERN TUNISIA WITH THE CAPE BON AREA; (2) THE COMPLETION OF A ROAD ENGINEERED BY THE CHINESE CONNECTING THE TWO TUNISIAN CITIES OF BEGA AND MORNAGHIA; AND, (3) THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROLLING STOCK ASSEMBLY PLANT. UPON COMPLETION OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANT, ROLLING STOCK PARTS ARE TO BE IMPORTED FROM THE PRC FOR ASSEMBLY IN TUNISIA. CHATTI SAID THAT THE THREE PROJECTS WERE AGREED TO BY THE PRC UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A TEAM OF PRC TECHNICIANS WHO HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM TUNISIA.

3. CHATTI ALSO STATED THAT PROSPECTS FOR INCREASED TRADE BETWEEN THE PRC AND TUNISIA WERE DISCUSSED DURING HIS STAY IN CHINA AND THAT HE ANTICIPATED INCREASED TUNISIAN EXPORTS TO THE PRC AFTER THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. THE ARTICLE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED MAJOR TUNISIAN EXPORTS TO THE PRC OF PHOSPHATES AND CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS AND IMPORTS OF SILK, TEXTILES AND TEA.

4. THE DOLLAR VALUE GIVEN FOR THE THREE PROJECTS, \$41 MILLION, IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO AND THUS COMMITS ALL OF THE FUNDS AVAILABLE UNDER THE PRC LOAN SIGNED IN SEPTEMBER, 1972. THAT DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE ON INCREASING PRC-TUNISIAN TRADE AND THE SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO PHOSPHATES AND CHEMICAL FERTILIZER IN THE INTERVIEW MAY SIGNAL INCREASED PRC PURCHASES OF THESE PRODUCTS FROM TUNISIA, PERHAPS TIED IN WITH REPAYMENT OF THE LOAN (REFTEL. THIS WOULD FIT IN WITH THE PRC'S EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY ITS SOURCES OF FERTILIZER SUPPLY. CROSS

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